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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of	:	
Muller, et al.	:	DECISION
Application No. 09/764,366	:	
Filing Date: 18 January, 2001	:	
Attorney Docket No.: 060967-0014	:	

This is a decision on the petition filed on 17 March, 2006, as a request for withdrawal of the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

For the reasons set forth below, the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **DISMISSED**.

NOTES:

- (1) Any petition (and fee) for reconsideration of this decision must be submitted within two (2) months from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181."

(It is noted, however, that Petitioner may be unable to present a satisfactory showing to support a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181, and Petitioner's only alternative will be to file a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b).)

- (2) Thereafter, there will be no further reconsideration of this matter.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the non-final Office action mailed 25 March, 2005, with reply due absent an extension of time on or before Monday, 27 June, 2005;
- the application went abandoned by operation of law after midnight 25 June, 2005;
- the Office mailed the Notice of Abandonment on 7 October, 2005;
- on Monday, 26 September, Petitioner filed the instant petition and alleged the timely filing of a reply in the form of an amendment filed over a 26 September, 2005, certificate of mailing (with request and fee for extension of time), and provided a copy thereof, with a portion of a date stamped receipt card (see: MPEP §503¹);

¹ MPEP §503 provides in pertinent part:
§503 Application Number and Filing Receipt

* * *

A return postcard should be attached to *each* patent application for which a receipt is desired. It is important that the return postcard itemize all of the components of the application. If the postcard does not itemize each of the components of the application, it will not serve as evidence that any component which was not itemized was received by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). It should be recognized that the identification of an application by application number does not necessarily signify that the USPTO has accepted the application as complete (37 C.F.R. §1.53(a)).

* * *

RETURN POSTCARD

If a receipt of any item (e.g., paper or fee) filed in the USPTO is desired, it may be obtained by enclosing with the paper a self-addressed postcard specifically identifying the item. The USPTO will stamp the receipt date on the postcard and place it in the outgoing mail. A postcard receipt which itemizes and properly identifies the items which are being filed serves as *prima facie* evidence of receipt in the USPTO of all the items listed thereon on the date stamped thereon by the USPTO.

The identifying data on the postcard should be so complete as to clearly identify the item for which receipt is requested. For example, the postcard should identify the applicant's name, application number (if known), confirmation number (if known), filing date, interference number, title of the invention, etc. The postcard should also identify the type of paper being filed, e.g., new application, affidavit, amendment, notice of appeal, appeal brief, drawings, fees, motions, supplemental oath or declaration, petition, etc., and the number of pages being submitted. If a new application is being filed, all parts of the application being submitted should be separately listed on the postcard, e.g., the number of pages of specification (including written description, claims and abstract), number of claims, number of sheets of drawings, number of pages of oath/declaration, number of pages of cover sheet (provisional application).

The postcard receipt will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of any item which is not adequately itemized on the postcard. For example, merely listing on the postcard "a complete application" or "patent application" will not serve as a proper receipt for each of the required components of an application (e.g., specification (including claims), drawings (if necessary), oath or declaration and the application filing fee) or missing portions (e.g., pages, sheets of drawings) of an application if one of the components or portion of a component is found to be missing by the USPTO. Each separate component should be specifically and properly itemized on the postcard. Furthermore, merely incorporating by reference in the postcard receipt, the items listed in a transmittal letter will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of those items.

The person receiving the item(s) in the USPTO will check the listing on the postcard against the item(s) being filed to be sure they are properly identified and that all the items listed on the postcard are presently being submitted to the USPTO. If any of the items listed on the postcard are not being submitted to the USPTO, those items will be crossed off and the post-card initialed by the person receiving the items. Upon return of a postcard receipt from the USPTO, the postcard receipt should be promptly reviewed by the person who filed the items to ensure that every item specifically denoted on the postcard was received by the USPTO. If the postcard receipt has been annotated to indicate that a particular item denoted on the postcard was not received by the USPTO, the postcard receipt will not serve as *prima facie* evidence of receipt of that item in the USPTO. (Emphasis supplied.)

- Petitioner's problem herein, however, is that Petitioner has ignored the requirement for pleading the instant petition within two (2) months of the act complained of²—failing satisfaction of the Rule, Petitioner's alternatives are petitions under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) or (b).

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).³

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority.

The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing

² The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.181 provide:

§ 1.181 Petition to the Director.

(a) Petition may be taken to the Director:

- (1) From any action or requirement of any examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application, or in *ex parte* or *inter partes* prosecution of a reexamination proceeding which is not subject to appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or to the court;
- (2) In cases in which a statute or the rules specify that the matter is to be determined directly by or reviewed by the Director; and
- (3) To invoke the supervisory authority of the Director in appropriate circumstances. For petitions involving action of the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences, see § 41.3 of this title.

(b) Any such petition must contain a statement of the facts involved and the point or points to be reviewed and the action requested. Briefs or memoranda, if any, in support thereof should accompany or be embodied in the petition; and where facts are to be proven, the proof in the form of affidavits or declarations (and exhibits, if any) must accompany the petition.

(c) When a petition is taken from an action or requirement of an examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application, or in the *ex parte* or *inter partes* prosecution of a reexamination proceeding, it may be required that there have been a proper request for reconsideration (§ 1.111) and a repeated action by the examiner. The examiner may be directed by the Director to furnish a written statement, within a specified time, setting forth the reasons for his or her decision upon the matters averred in the petition, supplying a copy to the petitioner.

(d) Where a fee is required for a petition to the Director the appropriate section of this part will so indicate. If any required fee does not accompany the petition, the petition will be dismissed.

(e) Oral hearing will not be granted except when considered necessary by the Director.

(f) The mere filing of a petition will not stay any period for reply that may be running against the application, nor act as a stay of other proceedings. Any petition under this part not filed within two months of the mailing date of the action or notice from which relief is requested may be dismissed as untimely, except as otherwise provided. This two-month period is not extendable.

(g) The Director may delegate to appropriate Patent and Trademark Office officials the determination of petitions.

[24 FR 10332, Dec. 22, 1959; 34 FR 18857, Nov. 26, 1969; paras. (d) and (g), 47 FR 41278, Sept. 17, 1982, effective Oct. 1, 1982; para. (a), 49 FR 48416, Dec. 12, 1984, effective Feb. 11, 1985; para. (f) revised, 65 FR 54604, Sept. 8, 2000, effective Nov. 7, 2000; paras. (a) and (c) revised, 65 FR 76756, Dec. 7, 2000, effective Feb. 5, 2001; paras. (a), (a)(2)-(3), (c)-(e) & (g) revised, 68 FR 14332, Mar. 25, 2003, effective May 1, 2003; para. (a)(3) revised, 69 FR 49959, Aug. 12, 2004, effective Sept. 13, 2004] (Emphasis supplied.)

³ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.⁴

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.⁵ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁶ And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁷ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁸))

Allegations as to the Request to
Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment

The courts have determined the construct for properly supporting a petition seeking withdrawal of a holding of abandonment.⁹

The commentary at MPEP §711.03(c) provides:

* * *

**B. Petition To Withdraw Holding of Abandonment Based on
Evidence That a Reply Was Timely Mailed or Filed**

37 C.F.R. §1.10(c) through §1.10(e) and §1.10(g) set forth procedures for petitioning the Director of the USPTO to accord a filing date to correspondence as of the date of deposit of the

⁴ Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

⁵ See: Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁶ See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁷ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

⁸ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

⁹ See: Delgar v. Schulyer, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971).

correspondence as “Express Mail.” A petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment relying upon a timely reply placed in “Express Mail” must include an appropriate petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.10(c), (d), * (e), or (g) (see MPEP § 513). When a paper is shown to have been mailed to the Office using the “Express Mail” procedures, the paper must be entered in PALM with the “Express Mail” date.

Similarly, applicants may establish that a reply was filed with a postcard receipt that properly identifies the reply and provides *prima facie* evidence that the reply was timely filed. See MPEP § 503. For example, if the application has been held abandoned for failure to file a reply to a first Office action, and applicant has a postcard receipt showing that an amendment was timely filed in response to the Office action, then the holding of abandonment should be withdrawn upon the filing of a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment. When the reply is shown to have been timely filed based on a postcard receipt, the reply must be entered into PALM using the date of receipt of the reply as shown on the post card receipt.

Where a certificate of mailing under 37 C.F.R. §1.8, but not a postcard receipt, is relied upon in a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment, see 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b) and MPEP § 512. As stated in 37 C.F.R. §1.8(b)(3) the statement that attests to the previous timely mailing or transmission of the correspondence must be on a personal knowledge basis, or to the satisfaction of the Director of the USPTO. If the statement attesting to the previous timely mailing is not made by the person who signed the Certificate of Mailing (i.e., there is no personal knowledge basis), then the statement attesting to the previous timely mailing should include evidence that supports the conclusion that the correspondence was actually mailed (e.g., copies of a mailing log establishing that correspondence was mailed for that application). When the correspondence is shown to have been timely filed based on a certificate of mailing, the correspondence is entered into PALM with the actual date of receipt (i.e., the date that the duplicate copy of the papers was filed with the statement under 37 C.F.R. §1.8).

37 C.F.R. §1.8(b) also permits applicant to notify the Office of a previous mailing or transmission of correspondence and submit a

statement under 37 C.F.R. 1.8(b)(3) accompanied by a duplicate copy of the correspondence when a reasonable amount of time (e.g., more than one month) has elapsed from the time of mailing or transmitting of the correspondence. Applicant does not have to wait until the application becomes abandoned before notifying the Office of the previous mailing or transmission of the correspondence. Applicant should check the private Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system for the status of the correspondence before notifying the Office. See MPEP § 512.

* * *

Moreover, the regulation requires that relief be sought within two (2) months of the act complained of.

Thus, Petitioner appears not to have satisfied the showing requirements described above.

CONCLUSION

Because it appears that Petitioner has not satisfied the burdens set forth in Delgar v. Schulyer, the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 hereby is **dismissed**.

ALTERNATIVE VENUE

Petitioner's only alternative to irretrievable abandonment may be a petition alleging unavoiable or unintentional delay under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) or (b).¹⁰

Petitioner may wish to file such a petition to the Commissioner requesting revival of an application abandoned due to unintentional delay. (See: http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/mpep/documents/0700_711_03_c.htm#sect711.03c)

A petition to revive on the grounds of unintentional delay must be filed promptly and such petition must be accompanied by the reply (the amendment), the petition fee, and a statement that "the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition was unintentional." (The statement is in the form available online.)

¹⁰ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.183 sets forth that waiver of the rules is "subject to such other requirements as may be imposed."


Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:¹¹

By mail: Commissioner for Patents¹²
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

By FAX: IFW Formal Filings
(571) 273-8300
ATTN.: Office of Petitions

By hand: Mail Stop: Petition
Customer Service Window
Randolph Building
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214.



John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

¹¹ On July 15, 2005, the Central Facsimile (FAX) Number changed to (571) 273-8300. The old FAX number no longer is in service and (571) 273-8300 will be the only facsimile number recognized for centralized delivery. (For further information, see: <http://www.uspto.gov/web/offices/pac/dapp/opla/preognotice/cfax062005.pdf>.)

¹² To determine the appropriate addresses for other subject-specific correspondence, refer to the USPTO Web site at www.uspto.gov.